

Message Text

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ACTION OES-06

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 FEA-01 ACDA-07 CIAE-00 INR-07

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ERDA-05 PM-04 H-01 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHEC PRIORITY 6720

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 4928

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, TECH, PARM, JA

SUBJ: PURPORTED US NUCLEAR POLICY

1. IN EXCLUSIVE ARTICLE ATTRIBUTED TO GOVERNMENT SOURCE, APRIL 6 MORNING EDITION OF ASAHI STATES ON FRONT PAGE THAT USG IS ABOUT TO ANNOUNCE ITS DOMESTIC NUCLEAR POLICY. POLICY WILL CONSIST OF FOLLOWING "PILLARS," ACCORDING TO ARTICLE:

A. COMMERCIAL REPROCESSING OF SPENT FUEL AND UTILIZATION OF PLUTONIUM WILL BE "FROZEN" INDEFINITELY:

B. EMPHASIS WILL BE PLACED ON DEVELOPMENT OF OTHER FUEL CYCLES NOT UTILIZING PLUTONIUM;

C. A STRUCTURE FOR INCREASING THE PRODUCTION OF SLIGHTLY ENRICHED URANIUM FUEL (FOR LIGHT WATER REACTORS) WILL BE ESTABLISHED.

2. ARTICLE GOES ON TO SAY THAT ALTHOUGH THIS WILL BE USG DOMESTIC POLICY, IT WILL HAVE DIRECT EFFECT ON JAPAN, AND THAT GOJ WILL CONTINUE TO STRONGLY ASSERT THROUGH CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS THAT OPTION FOR USE OF PLUTONIUM BE LEFT OPEN.

3. SOURCE IS ALSO REPORTED TO STATE THAT LIKELY ALTERNATIVE FUEL CYCLE FOR U.S. WILL BE THORIUM-URANIUM 233; THAT URANIUM 233 IS RECOVERED IN LESS PURE FORM THAN PLUTONIUM AND THEREFORE IS CONFIDENTIAL

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LESS SUSCEPTIBLE TO USE IN WEAPONS; AND THAT JAPAN HAD PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED THIS CYCLE AND HAD REJECTED IT IN FAVOR OF PLUTONIUM. CONCLUSION IS THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR JAPAN TO CHANGE COURSE SO SUDDENLY, CONSIDERING THAT CLEAR-CUT PROSPECTS FOR UTILIZATION OF THORIUM ARE NOT YET APPARENT.

4. APRIL 6 NIHON KIEZAI ARTICLE, SOURCED TO UNIDENTIFIED GOVERN-

MENT OFFICIAL, SUGGESTED JAPAN MIGHT SEEK TO "JOIN FORCES WITH FRANCE AND WEST GERMANY TO COUNTER US NUCLEAR POLICY." ARTICLE STATED GOJ WOULD ATTEMPT AT SECOND PREPARATORY CONFERENCE FOR LONDON ECONOMIC SUMMIT TO PLACE QUESTION OF NUCLEAR REPROCESSING ON FORMAL SUMMIT AGENDA IN HOPE THAT, ACTING IN CONCERN WITH FRENCH AND GERMANS IN MULTILATERAL FORUM, JAPANESE MIGHT OBTAIN "BETTER RESULTS" THAN IN SEPARATE BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH U.S.

5. SEVERAL PAPERS ALSO CARRIED "ROUTINE" TECHNICAL ANNOUNCEMENT THAT, AFTER EIGHTEEN MONTHS OF TESTS, TOKAI MURA REPROCESSING FACILITY WILL BE READY FOR "HOT" TESTING ON SCHEDULE IN JULY.

6. COMMENT. SCI/TECH DIRGEN UNO HAS MENTIONED "LIKELY" PROVISIONS OF NEW US NUCLEAR POLICY IN DIET AND ELSEWHERE OVER PAST WEEK OR SO. IT IS NOT CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT HE IS SOURCE OF ASAHI STORY. AT THIS POINT, WE WOULD EXPECT THAT MANY IN BUREAUCRACY, CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP AND EVEN BUSINESS WORLD WOULD BE PRIVY TO GENERAL OUTLINES OF NEW US POLICY.
SHOESMITH

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